



**CIVIL AIR PATROL
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE AUXILIARY
PACIFIC REGION
SAFETY
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Precious Cargo

As CAP activities and training increases with the advent of warmer weather, so does our exposure to "road trip mishaps". Sometimes courteous, attentive and professional driving isn't enough to stay out of trouble.

For many years now CAP and the general public, both private and commercial, have enjoyed the effectiveness and convenience of larger passenger vehicles. Sport utility vehicles, pickup trucks and vans have overtaken the common passenger car with tremendous popularity.

As accident records were accumulated through the years, intense focus has been directed towards the 15 passenger van. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has maintained a long standing program of education for the driving public regarding these highly useful vehicles and is again urging all 15-passenger van users to take appropriate precautions to guard against the possibility of a tragic rollover crash.

NHTSA research shows that 15-passenger vans have a much higher rollover risk than other passenger vehicles, especially when fully loaded with passengers and luggage.

Information on the NHTSA van safety programs is available in a multitude of presentations at their website at www.safercar.gov. Here you will find many items for distribution to units in your wing. You will also find many links to other sources of information on van *roll over* as well as other every day traffic and driving safety data.

How does it work?

What is different about our vans that causes all of the attention to their proclivity of roll over? Are all vans dangerous? What about "mini vans" and pickup trucks?

Rollover accidents are directly related to a vehicle's stability in turns. That stability is influenced by the relationship between the center of gravity and the track width (distance between the left and right wheels). A high center of gravity and narrow track can make a vehicle unstable in fast turns or sharp changes of direction--increasing the odds that it will tip over once it begins to skid sideways. The problem is more pronounced in 4-wheel-drive pickup trucks and sport-utility vehicles, which have a higher ground clearance for off-road driving.

A 15-passenger van (with 10 or more occupants) had a rollover rate in single vehicle crashes that's nearly three times the rate of those that were not fully loaded. The rollover analysis revealed that loading the 15-passenger van causes a shifting of the center of gravity rearward and upward, increasing the likelihood of van rollover. This shift in the center of gravity also increases the potential for loss of control in panic maneuvers, emergency braking and sudden avoidance situations.

These vehicles all share similar driving characteristics. Frequently, emergency braking and avoidance maneuvers often result in van/truck rollovers. In many rollover cases, the driver has had to exit their lane of travel onto the

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